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NEW RELEASE

Paul J. McNulty, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, announced today the dismantling of a major drug trafficking organization at a news conference held in Newport News, Virginia.

On Wednesday, January 14, 2005, a federal grand jury in Newport News, Virginia, returned a 324-count indictment, charging 31 individuals with importing large quantities of controlled substances into the United States; distributing the controlled substances; the laundering of millions of dollars in drug proceeds; and the seizure of substantial financial assets and drugs.

In an operation dubbed as "Operation Blowfish", teams of law enforcement officers began executing search warrants and making arrests on the morning of Monday, January 24, 2005. Agents and officers of the Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation Division, the Peninsula Narcotics Enforcement Task Force, which is comprised of officers from the Hampton, Newport News, and Poquoson Police Departments and the Virginia State Police, executed the search warrants and arrested 36 members of the organization.

The indictment was unsealed in U.S. District Court in Norfolk on Monday, January 24, 2005. Those charged in the indictment include: Joe Agapeto Rodriguez, a/k/a "Ricardo", Prendez Gonzalez", age 61, of Houston, Texas; Terence Lamar Johnson, a/k/a "Ronald Stroud", a/k/a "Kendoo", age 36, of Virginia and New York; Erik Leroy Miller, a/k/a "Dave A. Johnson", a/k/a "David Jackson", a/k/a "Hootie", a/k/a "E", age 40, of Houston, Texas; Charles McDonald Vickery, a/k/a "Charlie", a/k/a "Bid Daddy", age 56, of Houston, Texas and currently a fugitive; Lisa Lynn Baird, age 37, of Concord, North Carolina; Roger Bent, a/k/a "Jason Knight", a/k/a "Bigs", age 38, of Atlanta, Georgia and currently a fugitive; Jesus Ceballos, a/k/a "Chuy", age 59, of Houston, Texas; Angela Deneen Clark, a/k/a "Angie", age 40, of Hampton, Virginia; Robert Mack Darr, a/k/a "Bobby", age 59, of Newport News, Virginia; Robert James Dunn, Jr., a/k/a "Rob", age 56 of Highland Springs, Virginia; Gloria Lynn Green, age 45, of Newport News;

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Latarsha Lanelle Gore, a/k/a "Pinki", age 25, of Portsmouth, Virginia and currently a fugitive; Pamela Yvette Hoffler-Riddick, age 43, of Rockville, Maryland; Lamonika S. Lawrence, age 31, of Indianapolis, Indiana; Richard Bryan Lester, a/k/a "Mark Shepard", a/k/a "Kentucky", age 46, of Cooper, Texas and currently a fugitive; Ricardo Oscar Mancha, a/k/a "Rick", age 36, of Dallas, Texas; Brian Oneil Mason, a/k/a "Smurf", age 22, of Virginia Beach, Virginia; Jarice Devon Mason, a/k/a "Ja Ri", age 26, of Virginia Beach, Virginia; John Cecil McBride, age 42, of Chesapeake, Virginia and currently a fugitive; Pablo Mas Oquendo, age 41, of Newport News, Virginia; Sean Dunbar Quarles, a/k/a "Big Pun", age 32, of Richmond, Virginia; Eloisa Rios Quinones, a/k/a "Eloisa Vickery", age 51, of Houston, Texas; Lazaro Alvarado Ramirez, Jr., a/k/a "Agullero", a/k/a "Oscar", age 61, of Houston, Texas; James Frank Smallwood, a/k/a "Pops", age 65, of Suffolk, Virginia; Dorothy Johnson Smith, age 67, of Houston, Texas; Freda Marie Smith, age 38, of Houston, Texas; Jacqueline Stanton Stewart, a/k/a "Jackie", age 37, of Henrico County, Virginia; Marcus Eugene Taylor, age 26, of Hampton, Virginia; Kiet Van Troung, age 32, of Richmond, Virginia; Charles McDonald Vickery, II, age 25, of New Caney, Texas and currently a fugitive; and Tillmon Lamont Woodson, age 32, of Richmond, Virginia.

The following individuals have already pleaded guilty in this case and are awaiting sentencing: Aaron Burton, age 38, of Henrico County, pleaded guilty to drug and money laundering conspiracies and will be sentenced on 2/28/05; David Espailat, age 26, of Hampton, Virginia, pleaded guilty to drug and money laundering conspiracies and will be sentenced on 2/23/05; Haywood Chavis, age 31, of Richmond County, pleaded guilty to drug conspiracy and will be sentenced on 2/24/05; and Keith Austin, age 25, of Hampton, Virginia, pleaded guilty to a drug conspiracy charge and will be sentenced on 3/28/05.

Five individuals who are part of the conspiracy, but were charged by criminal complaints are: Eric Frantz Montgomery, a/k/a "E", age 20, of Newport News, Virginia, charged with possession with intent to distribute and distribution of more than five grams of cocaine base; Joseph Thomas Normandue, a/k/a "Jay", age 24, of Hampton, Virginia, charged with conspiring with others to possess with intent to distribute and distribution of more than 1000 kilograms of marijuana; Kenyatta Corey Brown, a/k/a "KK", age 28, of Hampton, Virginia, charged with conspiring with others to possess with intent to distribute and distribution of more than 100 kilograms of marijuana; and Jake William Hanton, a/k/a "Jay", age 21, of Hampton, Virginia, charged with possession with intent to distribute and distribution of more than 5 grams of cocaine base; and Keane Louis Gill, age 26, of Hampton, Virginia and currently a fugitive is charged with conspiring with others to possess with intent to distribute and distribution of more than 100 kilograms of marijuana.

The statutory maximum penalties for conspiracy to distribute cocaine, marihuana and crack is mandatory 10 to life and a \$4,000,000 fine; for operating a continuing criminal enterprise, mandatory 20 to life and a \$2,000,000 fine; for conspiracy to import cocaine and marihuana, mandatory 10 to life and a \$4,000,000 fine; conspiracy to launder money, 20 years and a \$500,000 fine; money laundering to promote or conceal, 20 years and a \$500,00 fine; money laundering of transaction involving over \$10,000, 10 years and a \$250,000 fine; evading requirement to file CTR, 5 years and a \$250,000 fine; structuring a financial transaction, 5 years and a \$250,000 fine; distribution, 5 years and a \$1,000,000; possession with intent to distribute, 5 years and a \$1,000,000 fine; maintaining premises for distribution purposes, 20 years and a

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\$500,000 fine; use of firearms in relation to drug trafficking, 5 years to life and a \$250,000 fine; possession of firearm by a felon, 10 years and a \$250,000 fine; use of communication facility, 4 years and a \$250,000 fine.

Mr. McNulty stated: "This drug gang flooded the streets of Hampton Roads with poison. Those who enable drug trafficking by providing firearms and by laundering money are as responsible as the drug thugs themselves and will be held accountable."

Joining in this announcement is Mike Netherland, Resident Agent-in-Charge for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in Norfolk, who stated: "This was one of the most significant and successful Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force investigations ever conducted in the Hampton Roads area. The coordinated arrests in Virginia and other states around country would not have been possible without unprecedented cooperation between numerous federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies."

The investigation was conducted by the Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation Division, and the Peninsula Narcotics Enforcement Task Force, which is comprised of officers from the Hampton, Newport News, and Poquoson Police Departments and the Virginia State Police. Also assisting in the investigation were officers from the Henrico County and City of Norfolk Police Departments.

Assistant United States Attorney Lisa McKeel and Assistant United States Attorney Eric Hurt are the prosecutors in this case.

(It should be noted that defendants are considered innocent until proven guilty.)

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